

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW POUCH
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 5 DACCA 4189

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EAID BG US
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BANGLADESH

SUMMARY: DESPITE NUMEROUS BUT NEVERTHELESS SUPERFICIAL IMPROVEMENTS SINCE 1971, BANGLADESH REMAINS BESET BY PROBLEMS. THUS FAR PRESIDENT ZIA HAS HAD REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN BRINGING STABLE PEACEFUL GOVERNMENT TO THE COUNTRY. HE HAS STARTED A PROCESS TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT UNDER WHICH THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED AND MARTIAL LAW IS BEING DISBANDED, A PROCESS WHICH HE SAYS WILL LEAD TO "DEMOCRACY". IN THE UNCERTAIN DAYS AHEAD, HE HAS THE DISADVANTAGES OF INEXPERIENCE AND LACK OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATION AND THE ADVANTAGES OF A NATIONAL REPUTATION FOR HONESTY AND
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CONCERN FOR THE COUNTRY AND CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT. I GIVE HIM A FAIRLY GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS. HIS ADMINISTRATION HAS SCORED MORE FAILURES THAN SUCCESSES BUT ITS SUCCESSES, SUCH AS LAST YEAR'S UNPRECEDENTED GRAIN PROCUREMENT PROGRAM, SUGGEST THAT WITH POLITICAL STABILITY IT CAN IMPROVE. RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS INDICATE THAT BANGLADESH CAN ACHIEVE FOODGRAIN SELF SUFF-

FICIENCY IN NORMAL YEARS AT CURRENT INADEQUATE LEVELS OF CONSUMPTION BY 1985 BUT THAT OVER THE LONGER TERM THE NATION'S SURVIVAL WILL DEPEND UPON CONTROL OF POPULATION, ABOUT WHICH IT IS DOING VERY LITTLE TODAY.

ZIA'S FOREIGN POLICY IS DESIGNED TO ORDER HIS RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS SO AS TO AVOID INTERFERENCE WITH HIS DOMESTIC OBJECTIVES AND ADJUST HIS RELATIONS WITH MORE DISTANT NATIONS SO AS TO MAXIMIZE THEIR SUPPORT FOR HIS DEVELOPMENT. SO FAR IT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL. HE HAS ALSO BEGUN TO BUILD A POSITION IN THE NONALIGNED AND ISLAMIC GROUPS.

I BELIEVE U.S. INTERESTS IN INTERNAL STABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE SERVED BOTH BY THE ORDERLY GOVERNMENT ZIA HAS ESTABLISHED AND THE PROCESS TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS HE HAS STATED. OUR ASSISTANCE, PARTICULARLY FOOD, AND OUR POSITIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE HAD SOME INFLUENCE OVER THIS PROCESS. I BELIEVE OUR CURRENT LEVEL OF FOOD AID IS ADEQUATE. BANGLADESH'S RECENT TURBULENT EXPERIENCE WITH PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY SUGGESTS THAT ZIA MAY HAVE TO RETAIN STRONG EXECUTIVE POWERS IN ORDER TO CARRY OUT PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO MEET THE HUMAN NEEDS AS WELL AS THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION; I BELIEVE WE SHOULD SYMPATHETICALLY TAKE THIS INTO ACCOUNT IN APPLYING OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES. ZIA WANTS RECOGNITION FROM THE U.S. FOR HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PROGRESS ALONG THE ROAD TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. I

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RECOMMEND THAT WE GIVE HIM SOME NOW -- PERHAPS AN ENCOURAGING PRESIDENTIAL LETTER OR A BRIEF VISIT WITH THE PRESIDENT DURING A UN TRIP -- BUT RESERVE THE ACCOLADES FOR LATER ON IN THE PROCESS.

IN THE AREA OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WE SHOULD KEEP THE ATTENTION OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT ON AGRICULTURE WHILE, IN COORDINATION WITH OTHER DONORS, BRINGING MUCH MORE ATTENTION TO BEAR ON FAMILY PLANNING. OUR EFFORTS SHOULD BE FOCUSED; WE AND OTHER DONORS SHOULD AVOID TOO MUCH PROJECT AID, WHICH WILL DIFFUSE THE ATTENTIONS AND CAPACITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT. WITH INGENUITY AND ACTIVITY I BELIEVE WE CAN ASSURE THAT OUR AID BENEFITS THE POOR, BUT I AM UNSURE OF THE COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THIS CONCEPT. I URGE THAT IN THIS PART OF SOUTH ASIA WE STICK TO OUR POLICY OF SUPPORTING BILATERAL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES WITHOUT OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT. WHILE WE MAY AT SOME TIME WISH TO MAKE AVAILABLE NON-LETHAL MILITARY MATERIAL TO BANGLADESH, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD STAY GENERALLY OUT OF MILITARY SALES. FINALLY, GIVEN THE INCREASING COHERENCE OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD EXPECT IT TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. AT THE SAME

TIME, WITH THE OPENING UP OF POLITICS AND THE INCLUSION
IN THE CABINET OF POLITICAL FIGURES WHO HAVE IN THE PAST
TAKEN LEFTIST (PRO-CHINESE) POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL
ISSUES, WE SHOULD EXPECT TO HEAR SOME LEFTIST RHETORIC AND
CRITICISM OF THE U.S. IN THE FUTURE. WHILE THIS
MESSAGE REPRESENTS MY PERSONAL VIEWS AFTER THREE MONTHS
IN BANGLADESH, IT IS BASED UPON EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH ALL
ELEMENTS OF THE EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 5 DACCA 4189

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

1. ONE'S FIRST REACTION TO BANGLADESH IS THAT THIS IS NOT
THE PLACE HE WAS WARNED ABOUT. MUCH OF DACCA IS CLEAN AND
SOME PARTS ARE ALMOST MODERN (NOT, HOWEVER, THE AMERICAN
EMBASSY); THE PEOPLE ARE NOT STARVING -- IN ACT SOME SEEM
ALMOST PROSPEROUS; LIFE IS SECURE AND GOVERNMENT STABLE; THE
COUNTRYSIDE HAS A RICH APPEARANCE, ABOUNDING IN RICE AND JUTE;
AND MOST OF THE FOREIGNERS LIVE COMFORTABLY.

2. THIS FIRST IMPRESSION HAS A VALIDITY; THERE HAS BEEN VAST

IMPROVEMENT IN BANGLADESH SINCE 1971. YET THE IMPROVEMENT AND THE IMPRESSION IT CREATES CAN THEMSELVES BE DECEPTIVE. BANGLADESH IS DESPERATELY POOR; 80 PERCENT OF ITS PEOPLE ARE
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MALNOURISHED; ITS GOVERNMENT IS INEFFICIENT AND BESET WITH PETTY CORRUPTION; ITS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS MOVE DEPRESSINGLY SLOWLY AND DEPENDED FOR BOTH FINANCE (77 PERCENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT BUDGET) AND MOTIVATION ON THE FOREIGN DONOR; THERE IS A DISCOURAGING LACK OF COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF MANY EDUCATED BANGLADESHIS, WHO LOOK OUTSIDE THEIR COUNTRY FOR THEIR SALVATION; ALTHOUGH THE COUNTRY IS NOW QUIET, GOVERNMENT RESTS ON THE EDGE OF INSTABILITY.

3. INVARIABLY, THEREFORE, THE NEW ARRIVAL ASKS HIMSELF, WHAT IS THIS GOVERNMENT TRYING TO DO? CAN IT SUCCEED? WHAT INTEREST DOES THE U.S. HAVE IN THIS PROCESS? WHAT INFLUENCE DO WE HAVE TO MOVE IT IN DIRECTIONS FAVORABLE TO OUR INTERESTS? THIS MESSAGE, WHICH RECORDS MY FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF BANGLADESH AFTER THREE MONTHS HERE, SEEKS TO PROVIDE A VERY TENTATIVE SET OF ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.

4. POLITICAL STABILITY. ZIA SAYS HE IS BRINGING "DEMOCRACY" TO BANGLADESH. WHILE HE HAS SAID THAT HE INTENDS TO HAVE A STRONG EXECUTIVE AND SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT, HE HAS NOT DEFINED THE STRUCTURE HE PLANS TO ESTABLISH. ONE ASSUMES THAT HIS INTENTION IS TO CREATE A BROAD BASE FOR A STABLE GOVERNMENT WHICH HE WILL HEAD AND WHICH WILL CARRY OUT THE PROGRAMS HE HAS IN MIND. HE HAS CHOSEN REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS PROBABLY BECAUSE HE BELIEVES THEY CAN BEST GIVE HIM THE SORT OF BASE HE DESIRES AND BECAUSE HIS BELIEF IN SUCH INSTITUTIONS IS SUPPORTED BY THE MAJOR WESTERN AID DONORS UPON WHOM HE IS DEPENDENT.

5. CAN HE SUCCEED? HIS RECORD HAS BEEN REMARKABLE SO FAR. BANGLADESH HAS HAD TWO AND A HALF YEARS OF STABLE PEACEFUL GOVERNMENT DURING WHICH ADMINISTRATION, FOR ALL ITS WEAKNESSES, HAS BEGUN TO FUNCTION, COUP PLOTTING HAS BEEN WITHSTOOD,
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POLITICAL PRISONERS BY THE THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN RELEASED, AND THE MARTIAL LAW STRUCTURE WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED TO BRING ABOUT STABILITY HAS ITSELF BEGUN TO BE REPLACED BY REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS.

6. THERE IS STILL A LONG, LONG WAY TO GO. BANGLADESH

AS YET HAS NEITHER THE TRADITION OF CONSTITUTIONALISM NOR THE LOYALTY TO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO ASSURE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT NOT CHANGE OVERNIGHT ON ANY NIGHT. REPORTS OF COUP PLOTTING CONTINUE TO CIRCULATE AND MILITARY DISCONTENT MAY INCREASE WITH THE REALIZATION THAT THE END OF MARTIAL LAW WILL BRING A REDUCTION IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE MILITARY. WHILE ZIA HAS ALREADY OBTAINED A MEASURE OF CONSENT TO HIS RULE, FEAR REMAINS AN IMPORTANT DETERRENT TO POLITICAL DISRUPTION. WHILE THE OPPOSITION KNOWS IT WAS FAIRLY BEATEN IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, IT ALSO RESTRAINS ITSELF FROM NORMAL (AND EXUBERANTLY VIOLENT) POLITICAL ACTION AS IT KNOWS ZIA WOULD NOT STAND FOR IT. WHILE MOST POLITICAL PARTIES FUNCTION FREELY AND VERY MANY POLITICAL PRISONERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED, TWO PARTIES ARE STILL BANNED AND THERE ARE STILL PRISONERS. THUS THE LID IS ONLY PARTIALLY OFF IN BANGLADESHI POLITICS AND THERE ARE MANY WHO, REMEMBERING THE VIOLENCE WHEN BANGLADESH LAST HAD PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY, HOPE IT WILL STAY PARTIALLY ON.

7. ZIA'S MAJOR TEST LIES AHEAD, AND HE HAS MANY DISADVANTAGES. HE LACKS THE DRAMATIC CHARISMA WHICH IS SO TYPICAL OF BENGALI POLITICAL LEADERS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS LEARNED MUCH ABOUT POLITICS AND OBVIOUSLY ENJOYS IT, HE IS STILL A NEOPHYTE IN A COUNTRY WHERE POLITICS IS AN OBSESSION. HE STILL LACKS A POLITICAL PARTY WITH A LOCAL ORGANIZATION, AND HE WILL FACE ONE WITH JUST THAT IN DECEMBER. AND HE RULES A DISASTER-PRONE NATION IN WHICH AT ANY TIME HIS GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO DEAL WITH THE EFFECTS OF FLOOD, DROUGHT OR HURRICANE COULD BRING DISFAVOR ON HIM. YET HE HAS COUNTERBALANCING ADVANTAGES. HE HAS COURAGE AND FORCE
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AND, APPARENTLY, A MEASURE OF GOOD SENSE. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR HONESTY AND A GENUINE CONCERN FOR THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH (BUT HE ALSO KNOWS HE MUST NOT TREAD ON THE TOES OF THE COUNTRY-BASED ELITE, WHICH COULD DESTROY HIM SINCE ITS INFLUENCE IS PERVASIVE). AND HIS VISITS TO ALMOST EVERY CORNER OF THE COUNTRY HAVE MADE HIM THE BEST KNOWN POLITICAL FIGURE IN THE NATION AND EVEN GIVEN HIM A MEASURE OF CHARISMA. PERHAPS HIS GREATEST ASSET IS HIS CONTROL OF ALL ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT; THIS ENABLES HIM TO DELIVER "DEMOCRACY" -- AS MUCH AS HE SEES FIT -- TO THE NATION A PIECE AT A TIME WHEN IT SUITS HIS POLITICAL CALENDAR. THIS BROUGHT HIM THE PRESIDENCY AND IT MAY CARRY HIM THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS TO SOME SORT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN THE SAME WAY.

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LIMDIS

8. I GIVE HIM A FAIRLY GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN ESTABLISHING
SOME FORM OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH MY GUESS IS THAT
SOME ELEMENT OF GOVERNMENTAL COERCION WILL REMAIN A PERMANENT
FEATURE IN THIS TURBULENT POLITICAL SOCIETY. WITH THE RETURN
OF MORE OPEN POLITICS, POLITICAL CONTROVERSY WILL ALSO BE-
COME A FEATURE OF THE NATION AND THIS CONTROVERSY WILL
INCLUDE BANGLADESH'S RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN NATIONS SUCH
AS THE UNITED STATES. FAILURE COULD COME IN SEVERAL
FORMS:

ASSASSINATION OF THE PRESIDENT; SEVERELY UNSTABLE PAR-
LIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT; ABORTED OR RIGGED PARLIAMENTARY
ELECTIONS FOLLOWED BY AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT; A SUCCESSFUL
MILITARY COUP. YET, GIVEN THE POLITICAL HAZARDS IN BANGLA-
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DESH, THAT HE HAS A FAIRLY GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS IS WHAT
IMPRESSES ME.

9. ADMINISTRATION. ZIA'S OBJECTIVE IS CLEAR; HE WANTS A STRONG EXECUTIVE WITH HIMSELF AT THE HEAD RUNNING AN ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM WHICH CAN CARRY OUT HIS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. WILL IT WORK? IT HAS NOT IN THE PAST AND IT IS JUST BARELY DOING SO AT PRESENT. INDIVIDUAL MINISTRIES MEANDER, FALTER, AND DECLARE BUT FAIL TO IMPLEMENT. THE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING MINISTRY HIRES AND PARTIALLY TRAINS FAMILY WELFARE ASSISTANTS, TURNS THEM LOOSE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND THEN FORGETS ABOUT SUPERVISING THEM. COLLECTIVELY, THE MINISTRIES FAIL TO COORDINATE. VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT PLANS ARE PRODUCED BY VARIOUS MINISTRIES; THEY ARE INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY INCONSISTENT AND BEAR LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO WHAT HAPPENS. YET IN A GOVERNMENT THIS YOUNG WITH THIS WEAK A BASE, THE FEW SUCCESSES RATHER THAN THE MANY FAILURES MAY HAVE MORE MEANING ABOUT FUTURE CAPABILITY. GOVERNMENT'S POTENTIALITY CAN PERHAPS BE JUDGED BY THE UNPRECEDENTED SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR'S FOOD PROCUREMENT PROGRAM, REQUIRING AS IT DID ORGANIZATION, SUPERVISION, AND CONTROL DEEP INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE. I CONCLUDE THAT

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IS WEAK BUT PERFORMANCE IN SOME AREAS INDICATES THAT IT CAN CARRY OUT EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS AND THAT THEREFORE, WITH POLITICAL STABILITY, IT CAN PROVE.

10. DEVELOPMENT. IT IS CLEAR FROM WHAT ZIA SAYS PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THAT HIS MAJOR OBJECTIVES ARE TO GROW MORE FOOD, TO REDUCE POPULATION GROWTH RATE AND TO DEVELOP HIS NATION'S RURAL AREAS. CAN HE SUCCEED? IF BANGLADESH CAN MAINTAIN A GROWTH RATE IN FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION IN EXCESS OF
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4 PERCENT PER YEAR UNTIL 1985 IT WILL BE "SELF-SUFFICIENT" AT PRESENT INADEQUATE LEVELS OF CONSUMPTION. THE SUCCESS OF LAST YEAR'S PROCUREMENT PROGRAM IN MAINTAINING INCENTIVE PRICES, THE SHARP INCREASE IN THE USE OF FERTILIZER, THE INCREASE IN WINTER HIGH YIELD CROPS (BOTH WHEAT AND RICE) AND THE RECORD 1977-8 CROPS WHICH THESE AND GOOD WEATHER PRODUCED SUGGEST THAT THIS GROWTH WILL BE POSSIBLE IN NORMAL YEARS. BUT SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY 1985 DEALS ONLY WITH THE MEDIUM TERM. OVER THE LONG TERM, SURVIVAL WILL DEPEND UPON CONTROL OF POPULATION AND BANGLADESH IS DOING PRECIOUS LITTLE ABOUT THAT NOW. THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE A COURAGEOUS PUBLIC POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO FAMILY PLANNING. HE TELLS ME THAT HE HAS PASSED THE STAGE OF TREADING LIGHTLY ON PUBLIC SENSIBILITIES; EVEN THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ARE NOW WITH HIM. NOW IS THE TIME, HE SAYS, TO GET TO WORK. HIS MINISTRY OF FAMILY PLANNING HAS SHOWN LITTLE SIGN OF THAT SO FAR DESPITE WHAT MAY BE THE MOST EXTENSIVE ARRAY OF DONOR ASSISTANCE EVER OFFERED AN UNDEVELOPED NATION. THEN, OF COURSE,

THERE IS THE PROBLEM OF RURAL EMPLOYMENT; HOW TO GENERATE INCOME SO THAT THE LANDLESS CAN BUY THE FOOD THAT IS GROWN. VERY LITTLE HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR TO GENERATE PERMANENT NONAGRICULTURAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND, GIVEN CAPITAL COSTS, I AM NOT SANGUINE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE THE RESOLVE OR CAPACITY TO DO MUCH IN THIS AREA. FINALLY, THERE ARE SEVERE INHIBITIONS ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CAUSED BY INTRACTABLE PATTERNS OF LAND TENURE WHICH ARE SUPPORTED BY BANGLADESH'S POWERFUL POLITICAL ELITE. IT IS UNCERTAIN HOW FAR AGRICULTURAL GROWTH CAN PROCEED WITHOUT REFORM AND HOW FAR REFORM CAN PROCEED WITHOUT FUNDAMENTAL SOCIAL CHANGE. THE TECHNICAL PROBLEM OF DEVISING AN EFFECTIVE LAND REFORM PROGRAM IS VERY GREAT; EVEN GREATER WOULD BE THE POLITICAL PROBLEM OF PUTTING IT INTO EFFECT. I DOUBT THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT COULD AFFORD THE POLITICAL RISK. I CONCLUDE THAT THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR HOPE THAT BANGLADESH CAN BECOME "SELF-SUFFICIENT" IN FOODGRAINS AT PRESENT CONSUMPTION LEVELS DURING NORMAL YEARS OVER THE MEDIUM TERM. OPTIMISM OVER THE LONG

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TERM WILL REQUIRE MUCH MORE IN THE WAY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE FIELDS OFFAMILY PLANNING, LAND REFORM AND RURAL EMPLOYMENT.

11. EVEN IF ZIA SUCCEEDS IN ALL OF THE AREAS I HAVE DISCUSSED, THERE REMAINS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER HIS PROGRAMS WILL REACH THE POOREST PEOPLE IN BANGLADESH. LIKE SO MANY OTHER UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES, BANGLADESH IS CONTROLLED BY AN OLIGARCHY WITH TIES TO THE LAND WHICH NONE BUT THE REVOLUTIONARY LEADER CAN AFFORD TO NEGLECT. ALTHOUGH I DO NOT DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF ZIA'S INTENTION TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE ORDINARY FARMER, I DOUBT THAT HE HAS, AT PRESENT, THE OPTION OF DOING SO AT THE EXPENSE OF THE RURAL ELITE. WHAT I BELIEVE HE CAN DO (WITH PERSISTENT OUTSIDE HELP) IS TO INSURE THAT THE POOR AT LEAST PARTICIPATE IN BANGLADESH'S DEVELOPMENT. HE HAS NOT YET, HOWEVER, DEVISED A STRATEGY FOR BRINGING THIS ABOUT AND I DON'T FIND IT HIGH IN THE PRIORITIES OF SOME MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT WITH WHOM I HAVE DISCUSSED IT.

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LIMDIS

12. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. ZIA'S POLICY IS A SIMPLE ONE:
TO ORDER HIS RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS SO AS TO AVOID
INTERFERENCE WITH HIS DOMESTIC OBJECTIVES AND TO ADJUST
HIS RELATIONS WITH MORE DISTANT POWERS SO AS TO MAXIMIZE
THEIR SUPPORT TO HIS DEVELOPMENT. SO FAR HE HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL.
PARTLY BECAUSE OF HIS EFFORTS AND PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE COOPERATION
OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, MANY OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PAST HAVE BEEN
WORKED OUT. THE ONLY PROBLEM IS WITH REFUGEES FROM BURMA AND SO FAR
THE MIGNITUDE OF THIS DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY TO CAUSE REPERCUSSIONS
SUFFICIENT TO INTERFERE WITH HIS DOMESTIC PROGRAMS. ZIA HAS MANAGED
HIS RELATIONS WITH AID DONORS WITH SIMILAR SKILL; ALTHOUGH DONORS ARE
ANNOYED BY THE INEFFICIENCIES OF HIS GOVERNMENT, AID CONTINUES TO
INCREASE. WHILE MAINTAINING HIS WESTERN DONOR CONSITUENCY
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ZIA HAS ADDED TO IT AN ARAB OIL ELEMENT (SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT,
U.A.E.) HE HAS BEGUN TO BUILD A POSITION WITHIN THE ISLAMIC BLOC
AND THE NONALIGNED MOVEMENT AND IS SEEKING A SEAT IN THE SECURITY
COUNCIL. SO FAR, POSITIONS HE HAS TAKEN IN THESE FORA HAVE NOT
DAMAGED HIS RELATIONS WITH AID DONORS; I AM NOT SURE THAT HE IS
AWARE THAT A POTENTIAL PROBLEM EXISTS.

13. U.S. INTERESTS AND INFLUENCE. WHAT PRESIDENT ZIA IS TRYING TO
DO IN BANGLADESH IS GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH THE LIMITED U.S.
INTEREST HERE. OUR INTERESTS IN INTERNAL

STABILITY AND YMAN RIGHTS ARE SERVED BOTH BY THE ORDERLY GOVERNMENT WHICH HE HAS ESTABLISHED AND BY THE PROCESS TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS WHICH HE HAS INITIATED. WE HAVE SOME INFLUENCE HERE BUT IT IS LIMITED. MOST IMPORTANT ARE OUR AID AND PARTICULARLY OUR FOOD PROGRAMS. ZIA MUST HAVE EXTERNAL RESOURCES TO SURVIVE AND WITHOUT IMPORTED FOOD HE WOULD CERTAINLY FALL. I DO NOT SUGGEST THAT USE OF FOOD FOR POLITICAL INFLUENCE, HOWEVER. OUR FOOD HAS BROUGHT IMPORTANT FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY REFORMS AND HAS SERVED IMPORTANT HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES. BOTH SUPPORT OUR INTEREST IN THE STABLE EVOLUTION OF GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURAL WHICH ZIA HAS BEGUN. I BELIEVE OUR FOOD LEVELS ARE NOW CORRECT. THERE MAY BE A NEED DURING THE NEXT SIX MONTHS TO RECOGNIZE THE DIFFICULTIES OF CARRYING OUT MAJOR POLICY CHANGES IN AN ELECTION YEAR, BUT I DOUBT THAT WE SHOULD BEND VERY FAR.

14. OUR INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY ARE ALSO PROBABLY OF SOME INFLUENCE ON ZIA. ALTHOUGH HIS PRIMARY MOTIVATION IS PROBABLY HIS DESIRE TO PROVIDE STABLE AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT TO BANGLADESH UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, HE IS ALSO UNDOUBTEDLY LOOKING OVER HIS
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SHOULDER AT US. I AM UNCERTAIN JUST HOW FAR HE WILL CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF LIBERALIZATION; THE TURBULENCE AND VIOLENCE OF BANGLADESH'S RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY SUGGEST HE MAY PLAN TO RETAIN CERTAIN STRONG EXECUTIVE POWERS. INDEED EXERCISE OF SUCH POWERS MAY BE NECESSARY IF HIS GOVERNMENT IS TO MEET BOTH THE HUMAN NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF ITS PEOPLE. I BELIEVE OUR APPLICATION OF OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES TO BANGLADESH SHOULD TAKE THESE FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT.

15. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, OUR EXERCISE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE EVOLUTION OF HIS SYSTEM AND HIS RESPONSE TO IT HAS UNDOUBTEDLY GIVEN US SOME OBLIGATION IN HIS EYES. IN PART WE CAN MEET HIS EXPECTATIONS SIMPLY BY CONTINUING OUR GENEROUS FOOD AND ECONOMIC AID. BUT HE WANTS MORE THAN THIS; HE WANTS PUBLIC U.S. RECOGNITION FOR HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS. AS HE CONTINUES ALONG THE ROAD TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT HE IS TRAVELING -- IF HE CAN DO SO SUCCESSFULLY -- HE WILL BECOME LESS AND LESS LIKELY TO UNDERSTAND OUR NOT GIVING IT. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD GIVE SOME SORT OF RECOGNITION NOW -- PERHAPS AN ENCOURAGING LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, OR, IF IT SUITS OUR OVERALL INTERESTS, A BRIEF VISIT WITH THE PRESIDENT WHILE ZIA IS ON A UN VISIT TO NEW YORK. BUT WE SHOULD RESERVE OUR ACCOLADES FOR SOME TIME LATER IN THE PROCESS, RECOGNIZING THAT SUCCESS IS BY NO MEANS ASSURED.

16. WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT INTEREST IN BANGLADESH
DEVELOPMENT AND OUR EXPERIENCE HAS DEMONSTRATED WE HAVE
MUCH INFLUENCE OVER BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES. I
BELIEVE WE SHOULD USE IT CAREFULLY AND AVOID OVER-USING
IT. OUR AID AND THAT OF THE IBRD, ADB AND OTHER DONORS
SHOULD BE FOCUSED ON A FEW PRIORITY AREAS. OUR INFLUENCE
HAS BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE IN THE AREA OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL
POLICY AND THIS IS THE AREA OF GREATEST PROGRESS IN BANGLA-
DESH DEVELOPMENT. IN COOPERATION WITH THE IBRD, ADB AND
OTHER DONORS, I BELIEVE WE MUST KEEP THE ATTENTION OF THE BANGLA-
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DESH GOVERNMENT ON AGRICULTURE AS A PRIORITY AREA FOR DEVELOP-
MENT. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, I URGE THAT WE DO MORE TO
ADD A MAJOR SECOND EMPHASIS, A FOCUS ON FAMILY PLANNING. AID
DONORS MUST MAKE IT CLEAR TO THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT THAT,
IN ADDITION TO AGRICULTURE, FAMILY PLANNING IS AT THE CENTER
OF OUR ATTENTION. DESPITE THE WORK WHICH WE, THE BANK AND
OTHERS HAVE DEVOTED TO THIS SUBJECT, WE DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE
GOTTEN OUR POINT ACROSS. WE NEED TO USE SOME OF THE TECHNIQUES
WHICH HAVE BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL ON THE FOOD FRONT.

17. THE THIRD FOCUS OF OUR EFFORTS SHOULD BE RURAL
EMPLOYMENT BUT THIS SHOULD NOT DIVERT ATTENTION FROM
FAMILY PLANNING.

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EA-06 NSC-05 INR-05 CIAE-00
EB-04 OES-02 HA-02 TRSE-00 OMB-01 PM-03 DODE-00
NSAE-00 MCE-00 EUR-08 SP-02 SAA-01 /061 W
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R 051026Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9975
INFO AAMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 7541
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU POUCH

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO POUCH
AMEMBASSY RANGOON POUCH
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW POUCH
USLO PEKING POUCH

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18. WHILE WE CONCENTRATE ON THESE AREAS, WE NEED TO DEVOTE ATTENTION TO TWO ASPECTS OF OUR AID. FIRST IS GETTING AID TO THE POOR. I BELIEVE THIS CAN BE DONE (SOME EXPERTS DISAGREE) BUT IT WILL TAKE CONSTANT INGENUITY AND ACTIVITY ON OUR PART. WHILE THERE ARE SOME MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, INCLUDING, I BELIEVE, THE PRESIDENT, WHO BELIEVE THAT BOTH EQUITY AND EFFECTIVE DEVELOPMENT REQUIRE PARTICIPATION OF THE POOR, I AM UNCERTAIN OF THE GOVERNMENT'S WHOLEHEARTED COMMITMENT TO THIS CONCEPT. SECOND IS THE POSSIBLE PROBLEM OF TOO MUCH PROJECT AID. WITH SO MANY DONOR AND TECHNICIANS, AND SUCH LIMITED CAPABILITY ON THE PART OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT, WE RISK DIFFUSING PRIORITIES AND GOVERNMENTAL CAPABILITIES INSTEAD OF FOCUSING THEM. OUR AID SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY WHAT CAN BE ABSORBED IN PRIORITY AREAS AND THIS PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE APPLIED IN OUR COORDINATION
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WITH OTHER DONORS.

19. PRESIDENT ZIA'S MANAGEMENT OF HIS RELATIONS WITH HIS NEIGHBORS HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO OUR INTEREST -- AND HIS -- IN REGIONAL STABILITY WHILE WE HAVE ONLY LIMITED INFLUENCE IN THIS AREA, OUR POSITION OF ENCOURAGING BILATERAL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES WHILE INDICATING SYMPATHETIC INTEREST (BUT NON-INVOLVEMENT) IN HIS PROBLEMS HAS SUPPORTED THE PROCESS BY WHICH SOUTH ASIA HAS SETTLED DOWN. OUR ENCOURAGING BOTH SIDES TO WORK OUT A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT (OR MODUS VIVENDI) CONCERNING THE BURMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM SERVES A SIMILAR PURPOSE. I CONTINUE TO BE OF THE VIEW THAT SO LONG AS THE SOUTH ASIAN POWERS BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY, THEIR PROBLEMS ARE BEST WORKED OUT DIRECTLY BETWEEN THEMSELVES IN WAYS WHICH TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIPS AND WITHOUT THE INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE POWERS. WHILE EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN MAY UPSET THIS PROCESS IN THE WEST, IT STILL SEEMS IN OUR INTEREST IN THE EAST.

20. I HAVE SO FAR MENTIONED NOTHING ON THE PERENNIAL SOUTH ASIAN SUBJECT OF MILITARY SALES. WHILE THERE MAY BE MERIT AT SOME TIME IN SELLING SIMPLE NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD GENERALLY STAY OUT OF MILITARY SALES. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT ZIA WILL HAVE TO MAKE SOMETIMES EXPENSIVE PURCHASES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT

FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AS HE PROGRESSIVELY MOVES THE MILITARY
OUT OF POLITICAL POWER. I URGE THAT WE NOT SELL LETHAL
MILITARY EQUIPMENT BECAUSE WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN BUILDING
MILITARY STRENGTH IN BANGLADESH. OF EQUAL IMPORTANCE IS
THAT BY REFRAINING FROM SUCH SALES WE CAN HELP DEFINE THE
LIMITS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. THERE ARE THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT
WHO LONG FOR THE SORT
OF RELATIONSHIP THE U.S. ONCE HAD WITH
PAKISTAN. I HAVE GIVEN THEM NO ENCOURAGEMENT REGARDING THIS
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POSSIBILITY. I BELIEVE OUR ACTIONS AND WORDS SHOULD CONTINUE
TO SUPPORT A DEFINITION OF OUR RELATIONS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT
I HAVE SET FORTH IN DETAIL IN THIS MESSAGE.

21. FINALLY, THERE IS THE QUESTION OF ROLE PLAYED BY
BANGLADESH INTERNATIONAL FORA. GIVEN THE INCREASING CO-
HERENCE OF THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD
INCREASINGLY MAKE IT KNOWN TO THEM THAT WE EXPECT THEM
TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF
IMPORTANCE TO US. I RAISED THIS WITH ZIA WHEN I LAST
SAW HIM AND HE UNDERSTANDABLY REPLIED VERY CAUTIOUSLY.
ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, I BELIEVE WE CAN EXPECT THAT BANGLADESH
WILL DO NOTHING TO HAZARD ITS VERY GENEROUS EXTERNAL
ASSISTANCE. ON POLITICAL ISSUES WE SHOULD EXPECT BANGLADESH
GENERALLY TO FOLLOW NONALIGNED AND ISLAMIC POSITIONS; BUT
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ASK FOR SUPPORT ON A FEW KEY ISSUES. FOR
THIS WE WILL REQUIRE WASHINGTON'S GUIDANCE AND REPORTING
ON BANGLADESH'S POSITIONS ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PEPR, EAID, BG, US, (SCHNEIDER, DAVID T)
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